

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08 /100 W
-----110738 161010Z /15

R 160800Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1940
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USDOCOSOUTH
USDOCOLANDSOUTHEAST
USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 3728

USEEC

USOECD

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, TU
SUBJ: POLITICAL TRENDS ANALYSIS: STABILITY OF THE ECEVIT GOVERN-
MENT AND POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES.

REF: POLITICAL REPORTING PLAN FOR TURKEY

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1. SUMMARY: IF ECEVIT'S "PEACE OFFENSIVE" POLICY FAILS
AND THE US ARMS EMBARGO IS NOT REPEALED, ECEVIT WILL HAVE
TO PAY A POLITICAL PRICE FOR FAILURE. HE FACES A NUMBER OF
DOMESTIC POLITICAL CHALLENGES WHILE HE IS HEAVILY ENGAGED ON
SEVERAL FRONTS. HOWEVER, THESE CURRENTLY ARE OVERMATCHED
BY HIS STRENGTHS, ONE OF WHICH IS THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF
THAT TURKEY HAS NO DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVES TO ECEVIT.

ALTERNATIVES DO IN FACT EXIST, BUT ARE NOT STRONG OR PROMISING. WE BELIEVE ECEVIT COULD FIND A WAY TO SURVIVE A FAILURE OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY. BUT WE DOUBT THAT THE FAILED POLICY COULD SURVIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE NEW YORK TIMES RECENTLY QUOTED AN ECEVIT ADVISER AS PREDICTING THAT IF THE ARMS EMBARGO WERE NOT LIFTED, THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT PROBABLY WOULD "CRUMBLE". WE BELIEVE THIS PREDICTION IS CHALLENGEABLE, BUT IT SHOULD SERVE AT LEAST TO REMIND US THAT THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT -- THE ONLY TURKISH GOVERNMENT SINCE 1974 ABLE TO TAKE AN INITIATIVE TO SETTLE PROBLEMS BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE US, CYPRUS, AND GREECE -- WOULD HAVE TO PAY A POLITICAL PRICE IF ITS APPROACH TO OUR PROBLEMS WERE DISCREDITED. IN THIS CABLE WE CONSIDER THE STRENGTH OF ECEVIT'S DOMESTIC POSITION AND THE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES.

3. ECEVIT'S POSITION AS LEADER CURRENTLY SEEMS STRONG. HOWEVER, HE FACES:

A. A CONTINUING SUB-SURFACE CHALLENGE FROM TALENTED, AMBITIOUS RIVALS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY WHO NEVER SEEM TO STOP JOCKEYING FOR POWER;

B. THE USUAL PROBLEM OF KEEPING HIS COALITION TOGETHER;

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C. THE GROWING CRITICISM AND MANEUVERING OF THE OPPOSITION, LED BY FORMER PRIMIN DEMIREL, HIS BITTER ANTAGONIST;

D. WAVES OF PUBLIC REACTION AND DISCONTENT AMONG THOSE AFFECTED BY THE POLICIES OF A GOVERNMENT TRYING TO DEAL DECISIVELY WITH A NUMBER OF EXTREMELY DIFFICULT SITUATIONS ALL AT ONCE; IN PARTICULAR, THE INEVITABLE PUBLIC REACTION TO ECONOMIC MEASURES THAT HAVE TO LOWER THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF SOME GROUP WITHIN THE SOCIETY;

E. A CONTINUING DETERIORATION IN PUBLIC MORALE AFFECTED MOST IMMEDIATELY BY THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO REDUCE TO 50 PERCENT INFLATION;

F. CONCERN AMONG SEVERAL IMPORTANT SECTORS OF TURKISH SOCIETY, INCLUDING THE MILITARY, THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL VIOLENCE, FAR FROM BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL AS ECEVIT HAD FORECAST, HAS BECOME WORSE.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, ECEVIT'S LEADERSHIP POSITION SEEMS BUTTRESSED BY SEVERAL ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH:

A. NO RIVAL IS YET IN A THREATENING POSITION. IN PARTICULAR, DESPITE PERENNIAL RUMORS, THE OPPOSITION PARTIES DO NOT SEEM TO BE SERIOUSLY CONSPIRING TO WIN DEFECTIONS AMONG GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS, AS ECEVIT DID WHEN HE BROUGHT DOWN DEMIREL LAST DECEMBER. DEMIREL RECENTLY TOLD US THAT WHILE HE IS READY TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT IF CALLED UPON, HS PARTY REALISTICALLY EXPECTS TO SPEND THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS IN OPPOSITION. OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED FAIRLY SIMILAR VIEWS. HOWEVER, THE OPPOSITION DOES INCREASINGLY USE OPPORTUNITIES TO CRITICIZE ECEVIT AND NO DOUBT WOULD CAPITALIZE ON ANY MAJOR SETBACK FOR HIM.

B. SPEAKING TO HIS PARTY IN MARCH, ECEVIT CLAIMED THAT IF HIS GOVERNMENT FELL, TURKEY WOULD FIND ITSELF WITHOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE. THIS STATEMENT, WHILE IT DOES NOT HOLD UP UNDER SCRUTINY, SEEMS TO REFLECT A WIDELY HELD BELIEF THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO AN ECEVIT GOVERNMENT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANKARA 3728

THAT BELIEF, GROUNDED NO DOUBT IN TURKEY'S UNHAPPY
POLITICAL EXPERIENCES OF THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, PROBABLY
STRENGTHENS ECEVIT IN SEVERAL WAYS.

C. ECEVIT REMAINS BY FAR THE MOST POPULAR FIGURE
IN HIS OWN PARTY, AND HIS DYNAMISM AND DRIVE IN TRYING TO
RESOLVE THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS SEEMS TO HAVE MADE A GOOD
IMPRESSION ON THE GOVERNMENTAL ELITE, INCLUDING
SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS.

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D. ECEVIT'S "PEACE OFFENSIVE" HAS HAD BROAD DOMESTIC
SUPPORT.

5. THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES TO AN ECEVIT GOVERNMENT, BUT
THEY ARE NOT VERY STRONG. THE PRINCIPAL ONES CAN BE
CATALOGUED AS:

A. A NEW DEMIREL-LED COALITION, OR A DEMIREL MINORITY
GOVERNMENT, NEITHER OF WHICH HAS MUCH CHANCE AT THE MOMENT;

B. THE PERENNIALY PROPOSED ECEVIT-DEMIREL COALITION,
WHICH NEITHER OF THEM SUPPORTS AND WHICH DOES NOT THEREFORE
SEEM VIABLE;

C. A CENTER-RIGHT COALITION WITH DEMIREL REMOVED,
THE DREAM OF HIS RIVALS IN THE JUSTICE PARTY, OR AN RPP-LED
COALITION WITH ECEVIT REMOVED, THE CORRESPONDING DREAM
OF ECEVIT'S IN-PARTY RIVALS;

D. AN ALL-PARTY GOVERNMENT UNDER AN INDEPENDENT,
WHICH PROBABLY WOULD NOT WORK WITHOUT MILITARY BACKING;

E. A MILITARY OF MILITARY-IMPOSED GOVERNMENT (WHICH
MIGHT BE ONE OF THE VARIANTS MENTIONED ABOVE).

6. TO BE BROUGHT DOWN BY PARLIAMENTARY METHODS, ECEVIT'S
GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BREAK UP FROM WITHIN -- I.E.,
"CRUMBLE". WITH A SERIES OF POLICY FAILURES AND A SENSE
THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO SUCCEED IN ITS JOB,

DISCONTENTED PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT
COULD EITHER DEFECT AND TRY TO HELP FORM AN ALTERNATIVE
GOVERNMENT OR COULD INSIST THAT ECEVIT RESIGN. ECEVIT
HIMSELF MIGHT WELL DECIDE THAT A MAJOR FAILURE WARRANTED
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HIS RESIGNATION. DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION AND HIS SUPPORT,
HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE THE TACTIC OF RESIGNING IN ORDER TO
FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT.

7. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS
INTERESTED IN INTERVENING AGAINST ECEVIT. HOWEVER, THE MILITARY
APPARENTLY ARE CONCERNED BY THE WORSENING PROBLEM OF
DOMESTIC POLITICAL VIOLENCE, AND PARTICULARLY BY EVENTS SUCH
AS THE RIOTING IN MALATYA IN APRIL AND WHAT SOME COMMENTATORS
CALL THE "CIVIL WAR" IN SOUTHEASTERN TURKEY. SOME OFFICERS
MAY ALSO BE TROUBLED BY WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS A DRIFT TOWARD
THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. WE BELIEVE THE MILITARY ARE NOT
LIKELY TO INTERVENE OVER ANY ONE ISSUE BUT MIGHT CONSIDER IN-
TERVENTION IF THEY BECAME CONVINCED THAT DEMOCRATIC
ORDER AND THE STATE WERE SERIOUSLY THREATENED.
THE MILITARY PROBABLY WOULD RALLY BEHIND ECEVIT IN A
DRAMATIC, NATIONALISTIC RESPONSE TO A FAILURE TO LIFT THE
EMBARGO.

8. CONCLUSIONS: WE BELIEVE THE END IS NOT YET IN
SIGHT FOR THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT FURTHER, ECEVIT HAS THE
DOMESTIC POLITICAL STRENGTH TO NEGOTIATE EFFECTIVELY IF THE
GREEK SIDE WOULD ENTER NEGOTIATIONS. A FAILURE OF HIS
"PEACE OFFENSIVE" AND HIS US POLICY -- A FAILURE WHICH
WOULD BE MADE MANIFEST BY CONGRESSIONAL REFUSAL TO REPEAL
THE EMBARGO - WOULD EMBARRASS AND DAMAGE HIM AND
WOULD INFLICT COLLATERAL DAMAGE TO HIS EFFORTS IN OTHER FIELDS,
INCLUDING THE ECONOMY. BUT ECEVIT PROBABLY COULD FIND A WAY
TO SURVIVE -- PERHAPS THROUGH SOME GESTURE THAT WOULD APPEAL
TO NATIONAL PRIDE. WHAT WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO SURVIVE, HOWEVER,
IS THE BY THEN DISCREDITED EFFORT TO RESOLVE THE
PROBLEM OF CYPRUS AND US RELATIONS. SPIERS

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